

2/14/2023

Testimony in Support of HB6616

My name is Camille Kritzman. I live in New Haven, CT. I **testify in SUPPORT of HB6616 “An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status”**

I worked for an agency that provided services to immigrants and refugees in CT. While refugees are welcomed with full access to state benefits including HUSKY, this was not the case for my clients who, as is the case for the majority migrants, do not qualify for refugee status and due to policy deficits from the federal government, may never qualify for any form of citizenship. The disparities in the migrant experience in CT having access vs not having access to HUSKY is resounding. And today, you’ve heard testimony from many people who have experienced this disparity in CT for decades, at great cost to the physical and emotional wellbeing of themselves and their family.

As a case manager, I saw my clients self-manage serious health conditions until they ended up in the emergency room. In our state, illnesses that could have been preventable due to lack of access become a death sentence. Under current laws, emergency rooms become primary care centers for people without insurance. This policy of denying HUSKY based off immigration status is a public health nightmare that hospital staff and patients must navigate daily.

Denying basic healthcare access and affordable coverage is detrimental to the overall health of our state. I’ll never forget my client who limped home with a serious injury after he was a victim of a hit and run by a drunk driver, because he was too afraid of ending up with a large medical bill. Calling the police may have prevented the driver from hitting someone else, which is what happened that night.

Husky for Immigrants is such a commonsense legislation that government workers such as public-school staff or DCF would often approach me asking for help enrolling clients in Husky. I would have to explain that if the child is over 12 they are not eligible for healthcare coverage. This most came into play with social workers seeking mental health resources for adolescents. Without insurance, counseling is not accessible to most teens, resulting in major mental health crises that are left for school staff and administrators to deal with. This impacts the overall environment in our schools and affects students and staff alike.

My undocumented (former) clients pay taxes every single year to subsidize a health program that they cannot access. I volunteer at VITA helping undocumented people file taxes. So I first hand see how migrants save their hard earned wages to make sure they are doing their civic duty of paying the state of CT, even though it contributes to state programs they may never benefit from.

I’m a taxpayer in this state, I am the daughter of an immigrant mother, I graduated from UConn and have lived in Connecticut all my life. I believe that we have an opportunity to make history and be a state that truly cares for their residents. I want my tax dollars to go to this. I cannot feel healthy knowing my neighbor is suffering from a preventable and treatable illness due to not having a social security number. I urge you to not only vote this law out of committee, but fight for it on the floor.

Thank you for your time,

Camille Kritzman